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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate relationships between early family experiences of student teachers and observed teaching behaviors in preschool settings. A total of 109 students enrolled in teaching practicums at two locations completed a background information questionnaire. Subjects' teaching behaviors were noted by trained observers using the observer rating scales developed by McDaniel, Lohman, and Little (1973). Two teaching factors, teaching style and teaching technique, emerged from a factor analysis of nine teaching behaviors measured. Pearson product-moment correlations and a canonical variate analysis indicated that student teachers' academic majors were related to teaching technique and that some, but not all, of the early family experiences measured were related to teaching style. The saliency of the relationship of family experiences to teaching style was influenced by the age of the subject at the time those family experiences occurred. (Author/RH)

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EFFECTS OF EARLY FAMILY EXPERIENCES
ON
PRESCHOOL TEACHER BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

The purpose in the study was to investigate relationships between early family experiences of student teachers and observed teaching behaviors in preschool settings. The sample of 109 students enrolled in teaching practicum at two locations completed a Background Information Questionnaire and their teaching behaviors were observed by trained observers using the Observer Rating Scales by McDaniels, et al. Two teaching factors, Teaching Style and Teaching Technique, emerged from a factor analysis of nine teaching behaviors measured. Pearson product-moment correlations and a canonical variate analysis indicated that student teachers' academic major was related to Teaching Technique and that some, but not all, of the early family experiences measured were related to Teaching Style. The saliency of their relationship to Teaching Style was influenced by the age period in which those family experiences occurred.

Effects of Early Family Experiences on Preschool Teacher Behavior

Numerous studies have documented that the quality of the experience that children have in programs for their care and education rests with the teacher (Beller, 1969; Katz, 1977; Phyfe-Perkins, 1980; Truax & Tatum, 1966). Results of classic studies indicate that teacher characteristics and behavior are influential on behavior and performance. For example, Thompson's (1944) finding indicated that warm, helpful, and active teachers had children who were more constructive, less destructive, and had higher levels of guidance. Bandura and Huston (1961) discovered that preschool children who experienced a warm and interacting relationship with an adult model imitated that model more than children who experienced a cold relationship with a model. Katz (1977) examined teacher "warmth" and "intensity" and suggested that programs having high levels of both in teacher-child relationships are those that provide optimum environments for the development of young children.

When research on teacher effectiveness with preschool children is considered along with that relating to teacher effectiveness with older children, a number of dimensions of effective teaching emerge. These dimensions include warmth (Katz, 1977; Thompson, 1944; Truax & Tatum, 1966), enthusiasm (Rosenshine, 1975; Rosenshine & Furst, 1971; Unruh, 1968), clarity (Good & Grouws, 1977; Kounin, 1970; Lawton & Hooper, 1978), variety (Beller, 1969; Kounin, 1970; Rosenshine & Furst, 1971), individualization (Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Kounin, 1970), feedback (Beller, 1973; Lesner, 1967; Stallings, 1976), cognitive demand (Hart, 1980; Kuchemann, 1981; Shayer, 1978, 1979), freedom (Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Katz, 1968), and on-task activity (Gabrys, 1979; Kounin, 1970; Ryans, 1960).

Dunkin and Biddle (1974) have labeled these dimensions process variables. According to their theoretical model of teaching, four classes of variables, presage, context, process, and product, interact to produce teaching outcomes, i.e., what the children actually learn. Presage variables include those that the individual teacher brings to the classroom (e.g., family background, personality factors). Context variables are those which make up the teaching environment (e.g., characteristics of the classroom, school, community, and the children). The third class of variables, termed process variables, are the actual behaviors of the teacher and the children. The last set of variables, product variables, are the changes, short- or long-term, that occur in the children as a result of being in a particular classroom.

Assuming that previous research has identified key dimensions in preschool teacher effectiveness, the question as to how these dimensions or attributes are developed in teachers is of prime importance. Personality theorists (Adler, 1927, 1931; Bandura and Walters, 1963; Freud, 1949; Horney, 1937, 1945; Sullivan, 1947, 1953) suggest that behavior is a function of personality and that personality is formed primarily through spontaneous interactions within the family. Once formed, these personality characteristics are viewed as resistant to modification.

A few studies (Rosen, 1972, 1975; Ryans, 1960) have examined the relationship between effective teaching and early family life experiences. Rosen's (1972) study was designed to determine if certain characteristics in student teachers' backgrounds seemed to be predictive of the age group with which they were most effective. Results indicated that student teachers who were most effective with preschool children had experienced,

"a close and supportive family life...a strong sense of love and personal security, and...gratification" (Rosen, 1972, pp. 426-431).

In a follow-up study, Rosen (1975) sought to determine if teachers' family relationships seemed to influence their ability to relate to children and/or their preferences for working with children of different ages. She found that those who judged themselves as effective in relating to children perceived their childhood selves more positively and viewed parents as more supportive than those who judged themselves as fair or poor.

Ryans (1960) conducted case studies on twenty-five "outstanding" elementary education teachers. Results indicated that these outstanding teachers came from solid family backgrounds with much family activity. Subjects expressed a strong sense of belongingness during childhood and adolescence.

The purpose in this investigation was to continue the search for explanations of the teaching behaviors that student teachers exhibit with preschool children. More specifically, the study was designed to determine relationships between the student teachers' perceived early family experiences at different age levels and their teaching behavior in laboratory school settings with preschool children. Although perceived early family experiences could possibly differ from actual experiences, perceptual psychology is based on the premise that people behave in terms of how the world appears to them. From this viewpoint, understanding a person's perceptions is fundamental to understanding behavior (Combs, 1974).

Method

Design

The independent variables for the study were 14 perceived early family experience variables at selected age periods: family size (birth-2, 3-5, 6-11, and 12-18), parental disciplinary style (6-11 and 12-18), family crises events (6-11 and 12-18), family closeness (6-11 and 12-18), family activities (6-11 and 12-18), and family income adequacy (6-11 and 12-18). The dependent variables were two teaching behavior factors: Teaching Style and Teaching Technique. These factors were achieved by subjecting teaching behavior scores on the dimension of warmth, enthusiasm, clarity, variety, individualization, feedback, cognitive demand, freedom, and on-task activity to a rotated canonical analysis. Teaching Style was composed of warmth, enthusiasm, clarity, feedback, and on-task activity while clarity, variety, individualization, cognitive demand, and freedom formed Teaching Technique. The early family experience variables were regressed on each of these two factors.

Subjects

The subjects were 109 female student teachers enrolled in practicum courses at two college/university preschool laboratories. Sixty-two subjects were students at Location I, while 47 were at Location II. One hundred thirty-eight students were enrolled in these courses over the four consecutive quarters during which data were collected. Participation in the study was voluntary. Six opted not to participate. Twenty dropped

the course and consequently were dropped from the study. Three male students also were excluded in order to control for sex.

The subjects had a mean age of 21.20 years and a mean grade point average of 2.88 on a 4.00 scale. The majority of the subjects were juniors or seniors. About one-half were child development and family studies majors, while the others were elementary education majors and home economics education majors.

Research Sites

Both research sites were laboratory preschools within home economics academic units. Each facility is used for observations of preschool children's growth and development and for experiences in supervising and interacting with young children. Philosophically, children in these schools are viewed holistically and as active constructors of their knowledge. A play-based curriculum is offered focusing on individual needs and interests of the children. Furthermore, each school has a half-day program that enrolls children in mixed-age groupings with an approximate balance of age and sex; has a head teacher responsible for overall supervision, planning, and teaching of student teachers; has a few handicapped children enrolled in the nursery school; and serves the community as well as the institution, enrolling children from various socioeconomic levels.

Procedures

The procedures for data collection were identical at each research site. Early family experience data were collected in the first week of

the course. Teaching behavior was recorded by trained observers for a 20 minute period during the last two weeks of the practicum.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect data in this study. The Background Information Questionnaire (Dickerscheid, Briggs, and Gnezda, 1982) provided demographic data and information about the early family experiences of the subjects. The BIQ was developed specifically use in a major study of preschool teacher competency of which the present study is a part. The 46 questions comprising the self-administered instrument are designed to ascertain family background information at four age periods (birth-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-11 years and 12-18 years) as well as demographic data on the respondent. The instrument was pilot-tested prior to use in the study and was deemed to have face validity.

The Observer Rating Scales (McDaniel, 1974; McDaniel, et al., 1973) provided for systematic observation of each subject on nine dimensions of teaching behaviors. The ORS was used by trained observers to rate each behavior on a six-point scale. Reliability coefficients on observer ratings of the behaviors of the teachers in the training films were reported by McDaniel et al. (1973) as being: warmth, .95; enthusiasm, .83; clarity, .87; variety, .93; individualization, .91; feedback, .94; cognitive demand, .82; freedom, .79; and on-task activity, .93.

Findings and Discussion

The fact that the nine teaching behaviors seemed to fit together to form two factors labeled Teaching Style and Teaching Technique was suppor-

tive of an earlier theoretical notion (Beller, 1970) and consistent with earlier research (Briggs, 1982). Specifically, Beller used these two labels when he theorized hypothetical constructs distinguishing two aspects of teacher behavior. He conceptualized teacher style as being the "unplanned" aspect of teaching that is associated with belief systems and personality characteristics of teachers such as the level of warmth, relaxation, intimacy, sensitivity, and friendliness shown by the teacher toward the children. Beller described Teaching Technique as being the "planned" strategies and methods of teaching such as group size, individualization, amount of structure, and type of instruction. Examining the effect of conceptual systems upon teaching behaviors, Briggs (1982) found empirical evidence of these two hypothetical constructs and concluded that a teacher's conceptual system contributed to his/her Teaching Style.

To determine if the subjects differed on teaching style and teaching technique scores by location, a General Linear Models procedure was used. The analysis indicated that there was no significant difference on Teaching Style scores. However, the analysis revealed a significant difference between Teaching Technique scores ($F = 8.09, p < .005$) with Education majors at Location II scoring significantly higher on Teaching Technique than Child Development majors at Location I. Teaching Style became the criterion variable for the computation of a multiple regression analysis for the 14 perceived early family experience variables. As shown in Table 1, five perceived early family experience variables accounted for a significant amount of the variance in teaching style.

Insert Table 1 about here

To determine which categories/groups were contributing to the significance of the five variables, the Least Significant Difference was calculated for each. Family Size had three categories: Small (two or three members), Medium (four or five members), and Large (more than five members). The selection of these categories was empirically-based. Specifically, three studies (Mohan, 1981; Nystul, 1981; Page & Grandon, 1979) which examined the differential effects of family size categorized three members as a small family, four or five members as a medium-sized family, and six or more members as constituting a large family. The analysis showed that the mean rating on teaching style for teachers who experienced small families from ages three through five years ($\bar{X} = 2.51$) was significantly lower than the mean rating for those from large families ($\bar{X} = 3.31$) during the same age period ($p < .03$). Furthermore, the mean rating for teachers from medium families was significantly lower than that for teachers from large families ($\bar{X} = 3.31$, $p < .04$).

Family Crises Events (12-18 years) were rated by the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Two categories were formed: Low (subjects who had family crises ratings of less than 200 points) and High (subjects who had family crises ratings of 200 points or more). The mean rating on teaching style for teachers who had experienced low amounts of family crises events from ages 12 through 18 ($\bar{X} = 0.57$) was significantly lower than the mean rating for those who had experienced high amounts of family crises events ($\bar{X} = 1.95$, $p < .007$).

Family Activities (6-11 and 12-18 years) had two categories: Active (subjects whose families were active or somewhat active) and Not Active (those whose families were Somewhat Not Active or Not Active). Results indicated that the mean rating of teaching style was significantly higher for teachers who had participated in many family activities from ages six through eleven ($\bar{X} = 1.80$) than for those who had participated in very few family activities ($\bar{X} = -0.43$, $p < .04$). Furthermore, the mean rating of teaching style was significantly higher for student teachers who had participated in very few family activities during the adolescent years ($\bar{X} = 1.69$) than for those who had participated in many family activities ($\bar{X} = -0.31$, $p < .04$).

Family Income Adequacy (6-11 years) had three categories: Plenty, More Than Enough and Solvent/Not Enough. The analysis showed that the mean rating of teaching style for student teachers reporting solvency or not enough family income from ages six through eleven years ($\bar{X} = 3.73$) was significantly higher than that of student teachers reporting plenty of family income ($\bar{X} = -1.18$, $p < .025$). Furthermore, teachers reporting more than enough family income ($\bar{X} = -0.48$) had significantly higher Teaching Style means than those reporting plenty of family income ($\bar{X} = -1.18$, $p < .02$).

In order to examine the specific relationship between preschool teacher warmth and perceived early family experiences, a General Linear Models analysis was performed. The analysis revealed that teachers who were rated high on warmth were more involved in family activities from ages 6-11 ($p < .01$), less involved in family activities from ages 12-18 ($p <$

.009), had lower family income adequacy from ages 6-11 ($p < .01$), and experienced more family crises from ages 12-18 ($p < .03$) than student teachers rated low on warmth.

The significance of finding a difference in the mean ratings of Teaching Technique by location is that lower scores would be deemed more appropriate for preschool children. Thus, this finding suggests that education student teachers may need more assistance than student teachers of child development in developing appropriate teaching methods for young children. Although this finding is unprecedented, it supports what was intuitively believed--that education student teachers may have teaching methods that are more appropriate for elementary than for preschool children.

The finding that some perceived early family experiences account for a significant portion of the variance in Teaching Style suggests that a teacher's family background does have some effect on her/his teaching style with preschool children. Furthermore, it may be that Teaching Style is related more strongly to these family characteristics than Teaching Technique, while Teaching Technique is a result of training and experience in the classroom.

The finding that warm teachers report more family activities during the 6-11 age period is consistent with earlier research (Ryans, 1960). Although Ryans did not categorize early family experiences by age levels, results indicated that warm teachers came from backgrounds with much family activity.

The discovery that warm teachers reported less family activities during the 12-18 age period was not surprising. According to the child development literature (Elkind, 1971; Gardner, 1978; Watson & Lindgren, 1973; Wenar, 1971), peer groups begin to play an increasingly vital role in the adolescent's life and to serve many of the functions once fulfilled by family members. Knowing this, one would expect the adolescent to participate less in family activities and more in peer-related ones.

Although the finding that warm teachers report lower family income adequacy during the 6-11 age period was expected, no study was found which previously examined this relationship. It may be that individuals in families who are solvent or who do not have enough income "band together." Hence, family warmth helps the members to cope with the situation.

In view of Hill's (1958) theory, the finding that warm teachers experienced more family crises was somewhat of a surprise considering that the family crises events experienced by warm teachers were intrafamily events. However, Hill does note that different families experiencing the same event may interpret the situation differently. Thus, events that are defined as crises for one family may not be crises for another family. In any case, the fact that families of warm teachers experienced a high amount of stressful events during the adolescent years is an unprecedented finding.

Summary and Conclusions

Results indicate that for subjects in this study, family experiences affected teaching style while educational training affected teaching tech-

niques. It may be that current teacher training curricula is designed primarily for developing technique with little, if any, attention given to those dimensions of behavior that comprise teaching style. Thus, preschool teacher educators need to consider this issue when designing curricula if the dimensions under study are accepted as indicative of effective preschool teaching.

Some perceived early family experience variables were related at a significant level to teaching style while others were not. Those that were included Family Size (3-5 years), Family Crises Events (12-18 years), Family Activities (6-11 years), Family Activities (12-18 years) and Family Income Adequacy (6-11 years).

Some perceived early family experiences were found to be more salient determinants of teaching style and teacher warmth with preschool children than other family experiences at least for student teachers in a play-based program. Furthermore, the saliency of these experiences seems to be related to the age-period in which they occur. Further research is needed with subjects of heterogeneous backgrounds to determine the generalizability of these findings.

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Table 1

Multiple Regression Analysis for Teaching Style by
Early Family Experience Variables

Early Family Experience Variables	<u>df</u>	<u>F-value</u>	<u>Probability</u>
Family Size (0-2)	2	0.48	.62
Family Size (3-5)	2	3.50	<u>.03</u>
Family Size (6-11)	2	2.22	.11
Family Size (12-18)	2	0.45	.64
Parent Discipline (6-11)	1	0.11	.74
Parent Discipline (12-18)	1	0.61	.43
Family Crisis Events (6-11)	1	1.10	.30
Family Crises Events (12-18)	1	7.70	<u>.007</u>
Family Closeness (6-11)	1	0.24	.62
Family Closeness (12-18)	1	0.01	.91
Family Activities (6-11)	1	4.20	<u>.04</u>
Family Activities (12-18)	1	4.20	<u>.04</u>
Family Income Adequacy (6-11)	2	2.95	<u>.05</u>
Family Income Adequacy (12-18)	2	0.71	.49